

Cat Island

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: Dane Menhe



photo: USFWS

Mike Chouinard, Project Leader
Central Louisiana Refuge Complex
401 Island Road
Marksville, LA 71351
Phone: 318/253 4238
Fax: 318/253 7139
E-mail: FW4RWLakeOphelia@fws.gov

Refuge Facts

- Established: 2000.
- Acres: 9,463.
- Location: four miles west of St. Francisville, LA in West Feliciana Parish.
- Refuge office is located at 11763 Ferdinand Street in St. Francisville.

Natural History

- The refuge is along the southernmost unleveed portion of the lower Mississippi River and completely floods in most years. The river may rise several times during the year beginning in late December through June.
- Several habitat types including overcup oak-bitter pecan, hackberry-elm-ash, nuttall oak-ash-sweetgum, and shrub-scrub swamp occur on the refuge.
- The National Champion baldcypress, which is also the largest tree of any species east of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, is located on the refuge.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- One person assigned to Cat Island. Refuge is in the Central Louisiana NWR complex (nine-person staff).

Refuge Objectives

- Conserve, restore and manage habitats to contribute to migratory bird population goals.
- Conserve, restore, and manage aquatic resources.
- Conserve, enhance, and restore the historic native bottomland community and its associated fish, wildlife, and plant species.
- Conserve, enhance, and restore habitat to maintain and assist in the recovery of endangered and threatened plants and animals.

- Encourage the use of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the Service, local communities, conservation organizations, and others to promote public awareness of the resources of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Management Tools

- Forest habitat management for migratory birds and resident wildlife.
- Public hunting of deer and small game.
- Environmental education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships with conservation organizations and the local community.
- Establishment of Friends of Cat Island NWR, Inc.

Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Hiking (four miles of trails).
- Wildlife photography.
- Canoeing.
- Hunting.
- Recreational fishing and crawfishing.
- Birdwatching.

Calendar of Events

January-June: boating access due to flooding by Mississippi River; fishing.

April-July: recreational crawfishing.

July-December: hiking opportunities.

October-January: small game, deer, waterfowl hunting.

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Questions and Answers

Does the Mississippi River flood the refuge?

The Mississippi River floods the refuge in most years. When the river reaches 21'-23' on the Baton Rouge gauge, vehicular access to the refuge is restricted. Check with the refuge office before visiting the refuge when the river is higher than 21'.

What is the best time of year to hike on the refuge?

Once the Mississippi River drops in late spring, trails are available for hiking, birdwatching and wildlife observation.

Can I see the National Champion baldcypress tree?

The "big tree" is open to the public when the Mississippi River is below 21'. The Friends of Cat Island NWR, Inc. have adopted the area and are working to improve access.